

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6649

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARISHRERPT

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2213

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINT, PO

SUBJ: FARMERS BLAME PEZARAT CORREIA AND PCP FOR WEEKEND VIOLENCE

REF: LISBON 2193 (DTG 051615Z APR 76)

SUMMARY: SOUTHERN MILITARY REGION COMMANDER PEZARAT CORREIA'S QUESTIONABLE HANDLING OF THE APRIL 4 FARMERS' DEMONSTRATION IN PORTALEGRE HAS MADE HIS POSITION MORE VULNERABLE WITHIN THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. END SUMMARY.

1. MEETING AT ITS REDOUBT IN RIO MAIOR ON APRIL 5, THE CONSERVATIVE PORTUGUESE CONFEDERATION OF FARMERS (CAP) LASHED OUT AT SOUTHERN MILITARY REGIONAL COMMANDER PEZARAT CORREIA AND THE COMMUNIST FOR THEIR ROLES IN THE WEEKEND VIOLENCE IN PORTALEGRE (REFTEL). CAP CHARGED THAT PEZARAT CORREIA HAD
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BEEN INDECISIVE AND HAD FAILED TO MEET HIS RESPONSIBILITY

TO PROTECT THE RIGHT OF FREE ASSEMBLY. THE CONFEDERATION IDENTIFIED BY NAME AN ARMY LIEUTENANT FROM THE INFANTRY REGIMENT IN ELVAS AS BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR THROWING A GRENADE WHICH RESULTED IN MORE THAN A DOZEN INJURED FARMERS. CAP CHARGED THAT THE 1,500 FARM WORKERS TRUCKED IN FROM THE SOUTH TO PREVENT THE CAP DEMONSTRATION WERE MANIPULATED BY THE COMMUNISTS. CAP ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD NOT BE INTIMIDATED. CAP WILL RETURN TO PORTALEGRE ON APRIL 11 FOR ANOTHER DEMONSTRATION, THIS TIME PREPARED TO DEFEND ITSELF IN THE ABSENCE OF OFFICIAL PROTECTION. CAP ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD DEFER, FOR THE TIME BEING, IMPLEMENTATION OF A THREATENED CUT-OFF OF PRODUCE TO MAJOR CITIES BUT WOULD KEEP PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT TO MEET PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS.

2. LOPES CARDOSO COMMENTS: IN AN INTERVIEW GIVEN TO SOCIALIST DAILY "A LUTA" BEFORE THE RIO MAIOR MEETING, LOPES CARDOSO DEFENDED THE ACTION OF HIS MINISTRY. WHILE THE BULK OF THE INTERVIEW WAS DEVOTED TO STANDARD RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FROM THE FRIENDLY INTERVIEWER, LOPES CARDOSO ALSO HAD HIS USUAL DOSE OF VITRIOL FOR CAP. HE ASSETED THAT CAP WAS A LATE-COMER TO EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE PLIGHT OF FARMERS AND SUGGESTED THAT THE CAP LEADERSHIP PLACED POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS ABOVE THE INTERESTS OF ITS MEMBERSHIP.

3. COMMENT: CAP'S NEW CAMPAIGN AGAINST PEZARAT CORREIA AND COMMUNIST MANIPULATIONS OF RURAL WORKERS IN THE ALENTEJO MAY GIVE LOPES CARDOSO SOME BRIEF RESPITE FROM CAP ATTACKS. PEZARAT CORREIA IS ALREADY MISTRUSTED BY THE "OPERATIONALS" WITHIN THE MILITARY BECAUSE OF HIS LINKS TO MELO ANTUNES; THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL HEARD PEZARAT CORREIA'S EXPLANATION OF THE PORTALEGRE EVENTS AT ITS APRIL 5-6 MEETING. THE CAP ATTACKS AND HIS QUESTIONABLE HANDLING OF THE PORTALEGRE INCIDENT HAVE MADE PEZARAT CORREIA SUBJECT TO EARLY REMOVAL WHEN THE OPERATIONALS GET THE OPPORTUNITY.
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